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Annual Report

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER
OF HEALTH

FOR THE


Urban District of Northam
IN DEVON

For the year 1939

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J. EDMUND FRANCIS, M.O.H.
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BIDEFORD:

Printed by PEARSE & SON, Allhalland Street.



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ANNUAL REPORT 1939

1—Statistics and Social Conditions of the Area

AREA—4391 Acres.

POPULATION—Estimated resident, mid-1939: 5290.

Number of inhabited houses at end of 1939, according to rate books: 1784.

Rateable value: £31,753.

Sum represented by a penny rate: £122.

Social and Physical Conditions.

The District is divided into four wards for the purpose of election to the Urban Council.

Appledore has shipbuilding and repairing yards, which employ a large number of hands, and is a favourite sea fishing centre. Northam, Westward Ho! and Orchard Hill wards are chiefly residential, Westward Ho! being a popular seaside resort.

The well-known championship links of the Royal North Devon Golf Club are situated on Northam Burrows, and attract a large number of visitors during the year.

Under the name of Kipling Tors, a hillside overlooking Bideford Bay and situated in the south-western area of Westward Ho! has recently been purchased as part of a Kipling Memorial and handed over to the National Trust. This land is about 18 acres in extent, and is a welcome addition to the free beauties of the district.

2—Vital Statistics for 1939

Births and Birth Rate.

The total of live births in the District was 51, of which 27 were boys and 24 girls. One boy and one girl were illegitimate.

There were 3 still births registered (one boy and 2 girls). All were legitimate.

The live birth rate per 1000 of the population was 9·6, that for England and Wales being 15.

The still birth rate per 1000 of the population was ·56, that for England and Wales being ·59.

Deaths and Death Rate.

The total deaths were 72 (30 males and 42 females), but 30 of these were 70 years of age or over.

The death rate per 1000 of the estimated average population was 12·9, that for England and Wales being 12·1.

*The following table gives the causes of death
in the District during 1939.*

CAUSES				MALES	FEMALES
Influenza	...	..	...		1
Cancer	...	...	...	2	9
Diabetes	...	...	...	1	1
Cerebral Hæmorrhage	...	...	...	1	3
Heart Disease	...	...	...	13	18
Other Circulatory Diseases	...	...	...	2	2
Bronchitis	...	...	...	1	
Pneumonia (all forms)	...	...	...	1	1
Digestive Diseases	...	...	...	2	2
Acute and Chronic Nephritis	...	...	...		1
Suicide	..	...	...	2	
Deaths by Violence	...	...	...	1	2
Other Defined Diseases	...	...	...	3	1
Congenital Debility and Premature Birth	...	...	...	1	
Senility	...	...	...		1
Total				30	42

There were no deaths from Measles, Whooping Cough, Puerperal Sepsis, or of Diarrhœa in children under 2 years of age.

3—General Provision of Health Services in the Area

(1) *Public Health Officers of the Authority.*

There are three Public Health Officers for the Council—the Medical Officer of Health, the Sanitary Inspector, and the duties of Water Inspector are in the hands of the Council's Surveyor.

(2) *Nursing Arrangements in Area.*

There are two Voluntary Nursing Associations in the District, one for Northam, Westward Ho! and Orchard Hill; the other for Appledore. Both Associations employ fully qualified nurses, who also act as midwives.

(3) *Hospitals.*

The District is provided for by the Bideford and District Hospital, which is supported partly by voluntary contributions and partly by patients' fees. The Hospital is available for Medical and Surgical cases and contains about 40 beds.

The Isolation Hospital, situated at East-the-Water, Bideford, provides for infectious cases from the whole of North Devon, and was completed in 1935. It is now in full working order and up-to-date.

(4) *Ambulances.*

There are now in Bideford an up-to-date Motor Ambulance for Bideford and District for non-infectious cases, and an Ambulance in connection with, and kept at, the Isolation Hospital.

(5) *Clinics and Treatment Centres.*

A treatment centre for Venereal Diseases and a Tuberculosis Dispensary are available at Barnstaple for Northam District. Tubercular patients are admitted at Hawley and Hawkmoor Sanatoria.

There is a Maternity and Child Welfare Centre carried on at Appledore under the County Medical Officer of Health.

4—Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

Northam Water Supply.

The Water Supply is derived from a reservoir draining a large tract of moorland at Melbury, situated in Parkham parish, and about nine miles from Northam. The reservoir holds about thirty million gallons and is generally overflowing during the winter months. Owing to the numerous visitors to the District in the summer and to a large increase in the number of houses built, it has been found necessary to increase the storage capacity at Melbury and thereby conserve a larger supply for the District. The contractor commenced the work of excavating in the autumn, but, owing to frost and weather conditions, further excavation had to be postponed for 1939.

Analysis of the Water Supply.

A periodic analysis, both chemical and bacteriological, of the water is taken as a routine. The 1939 report from the analyst stated that the water is pure and fit for drinking and other domestic purposes.

Rainfall for 1939.

The Total Rainfall for 1930 was 59.96 inches, compared with 60 inches in 1938 and 38.39 inches in the dry year of 1921. The highest rainfall was 15.11 inches in November and the lowest

1'09 inches in May. These figures are taken at Melbury Water Works (which are about 500 feet above sea level) and are considerably higher than those taken at the Royal North Devon Golf Club at sea level, where only 33'5 inches were registered during the year.

Rivers and Streams Pollution.

The only river affected by sewage is tidal. There is, however, a small stream polluted by sewage water running through the south-west area of Northam District and draining a laundry and over a dozen residences. This stream is now, since the alteration of boundaries, under the control of the Northam Council. Endeavours are still being made to remedy the nuisance by trenching, but sooner or later a £2,000 piping scheme may have to be carried out if the present system is not satisfactory.

Drainage and Sewerage.

During 1939 the long contemplated drainage for Northam and Westward Ho! was completed, by a scheme taking the sewage out to low water at Rocks Nose, at the extreme western end of the District. This sewer is about three miles in length, but does not, owing to low level difficulty, connect up about twelve houses at Westward Ho! the overflow of which sewage still runs into the Burn on the Northam Burrows. This stream is washed by the high tides, but becomes a nuisance at low tides and in hot weather.

In addition to the new main sewer, 500 yards of sewer at Watertown, near Appledore, and 800 yards on the Bay View Road, Northam, were completed during the year.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

(a) During the year the Sanitary Inspector made over 300 inspections of a sanitary nature, apart from those relating to infectious diseases.

(b) There were 13 complaints of nuisances, which were all remedied after the serving of informal notices.

Schools.

There are five Elementary Schools in the District. All were inspected and found to be in a satisfactory condition.

5—Inspection and Supervision of Food.

Milk Supply.

(a) There are 3 wholesale and 25 retail dairymen registered in the District. Fifty-two inspections of Dairies and Cowsheds

were made during the year. Samples of milk are taken weekly for analysis and report.

Bakehouses.

(b) There are 6 Bakehouses in the District. Twenty-four inspections were made without any complaints as to conditions.

Slaughterhouses.

(c) The District has 6 registered Slaughterhouses. During the year 6 carcasses of animals involving 376-lbs of meat were pronounced unfit for human consumption and were voluntarily surrendered for destruction.

6—Housing

Numbers of dwelling-houses were inspected during the year under Public Health or the Housing Acts.

There were 13 houses found which were not in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation, but were rendered habitable in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their officers. There was no action taken under statutory powers during the year.

Number of new houses built during the year :

(a)	By Sanitary Authority	...	...	...	Nil
(b)	By private effort	...	...	...	22

7—Prevention of and control over Infectious Diseases

During the year 12 cases of Scarlet Fever, 5 of Pneumonia, and 1 case each of Diphtheria, Typhoid Fever and Erysipelas were notified in the District. Full use was made of the Isolation Hospital, situated at East-the-Water, Bideford, when necessary.

The cleansing and disinfection of infected rooms is carried out personally by the Sanitary Inspector, and in cases where the bedding of necessitous cases has to be destroyed, the Council gives reasonable compensation.

Diphtheria Antitoxin is supplied free by the Council in necessitous cases.

Tuberculosis

New Cases and Mortality in the District during 1939.

Age	NEW CASES				DEATHS
	Respiratory		Non-respiratory		Nil
	M	F	M	F	
16-22		2			
28	1				
29		1			
30-35	2			1	
Total	3	3		1	

Three of the newly notified cases, all respiratory, were visitors to the District.

No action was taken during the year under the Public Health (Prevention of Tuberculosis) Regulations, or under section 62 of the Public Health Act, 1935, or under section 172 of the Public Health Act, 1936.